

City of Greenville

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Downtown Development Strategy

Greenville, South Carolina

Submitted to

Greenville Central Area Partnership
City of Greenville, South Carolina

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Land Design/Research, Inc.

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I: INTRODUCTION

Greenville is an attractive city with many natural and man-made amenities, a strong and growing economy, and concerned and active citizens and government. It is much to Greenville's credit that, in spite of its many strengths, citizens and public servants in Greenville are still actively seeking ways to make the city a better place -- more human in scale, more attractive to visitors and businesses, more varied and exciting. The city has a long history of effective planning and economic development, and the knowledge that needs and goals for the City can and do change over time, necessitating periodic review and refinement of the vision for Greenville. Greenville is also unusual and fortunate in realizing that public participation in defining a vision for the City is the best way to ensure public-private agreement and coordination in its pursuit.

The Greenville Central Area Partnership (GCAP), a private group of concerned community leaders, contracted with Land Design/Research (LDR) in early 1989 to conduct a one-day workshop with prominent local citizens and city officials. Its purpose was to define a vision to guide growth in downtown Greenville over the next five to ten years. LDR's task was then to take this information, organize it, and respond to it in a way which would refine the vision and define a realistic work program for implementation. Section II of this report presents a synopsis of the Work Session, which was held on March 28, 1989. Participants in this workshop are listed in the Appendix. In Section III, LDR's response to this workshop is presented, in which we convey what the consultants felt were the most significant goals both in terms of expressed interest by participants, and in viability, based on LDR's professional experience. In Section IV we present a recommended Action Plan and Program for the next five-to ten years, setting forth specific tasks which are needed to make this vision for Greenville a reality.

II: MARCH 28 WORK SESSION: DEFINING THE VISION

Opening Comments

The work session began with opening comments by Mayor Workman in which he reminded those present that the LDR consultants were there to listen and not to tell the citizens of Greenville what the vision for their city should be. The vision was to be formulated by those present that day, and the consultants' task was to serve as a knowledgeable resource, and to aid the group in expressing and refining their goals for the city.

Bert Winterbottom from LDR presented a brief overview of the significant development progress made in downtown Greenville over the past 20 years. Significantly, since 1987, the downtown area has received approximately \$72.5 million in announced new development; the Duke Power Building, the GTA Transit Station, Performing Arts Center, Coffee Street Mall, and a number of smaller projects. Winterbottom commented that the city government has routinely been aggressive about downtown revitalization and its Tax Increment Financing Program is a model for public sector funding of downtown revitalization. Of equal importance is the private sector part of the downtown partnership represented by GCAP. (See Section IV for a discussion of the need for a greater role for GCAP in the future.)

Winterbottom then briefly outlined the results of a GCAP/LDR survey of a large number of individuals interested in downtown Greenville. The survey was meant to elicit opinions about Greenville's downtown and how it compared with other downtowns. Responses were as follows:

- *Outstanding Carolina downtowns:* Charleston (75.9%); Greenville (5.2%)
- *Outstanding U.S. downtowns:* San Antonio (14%); San Francisco (14%); Cincinnati (8.6%); others included Boston and Minneapolis.
- *Outstanding International downtowns:* London (28%); others included Paris, Toronto, Vienna, Zurich, Salzburg, Milan, and Munich.
- *Downtown Greenville Assets:* Hyatt Complex (48.3%); Attractiveness of landscaping and Main Street (44.8%); Performing Arts Center (27.6%).
- *Downtown Greenville problems:* Lack of parking (22.6%); High vacancies (24.1%); Lack of major retailers (22.4%); others included no nightlife, vagrants, lack of downtown housing, lack of focus or theme, and safety and security.

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- *Downtown Greenville actions that will make a difference:* Add coliseum (22.6%); Remove Camperdown bridge (14%); Variety of retail actions (32.8% total); others included more entertainment and stronger GCAP organization.

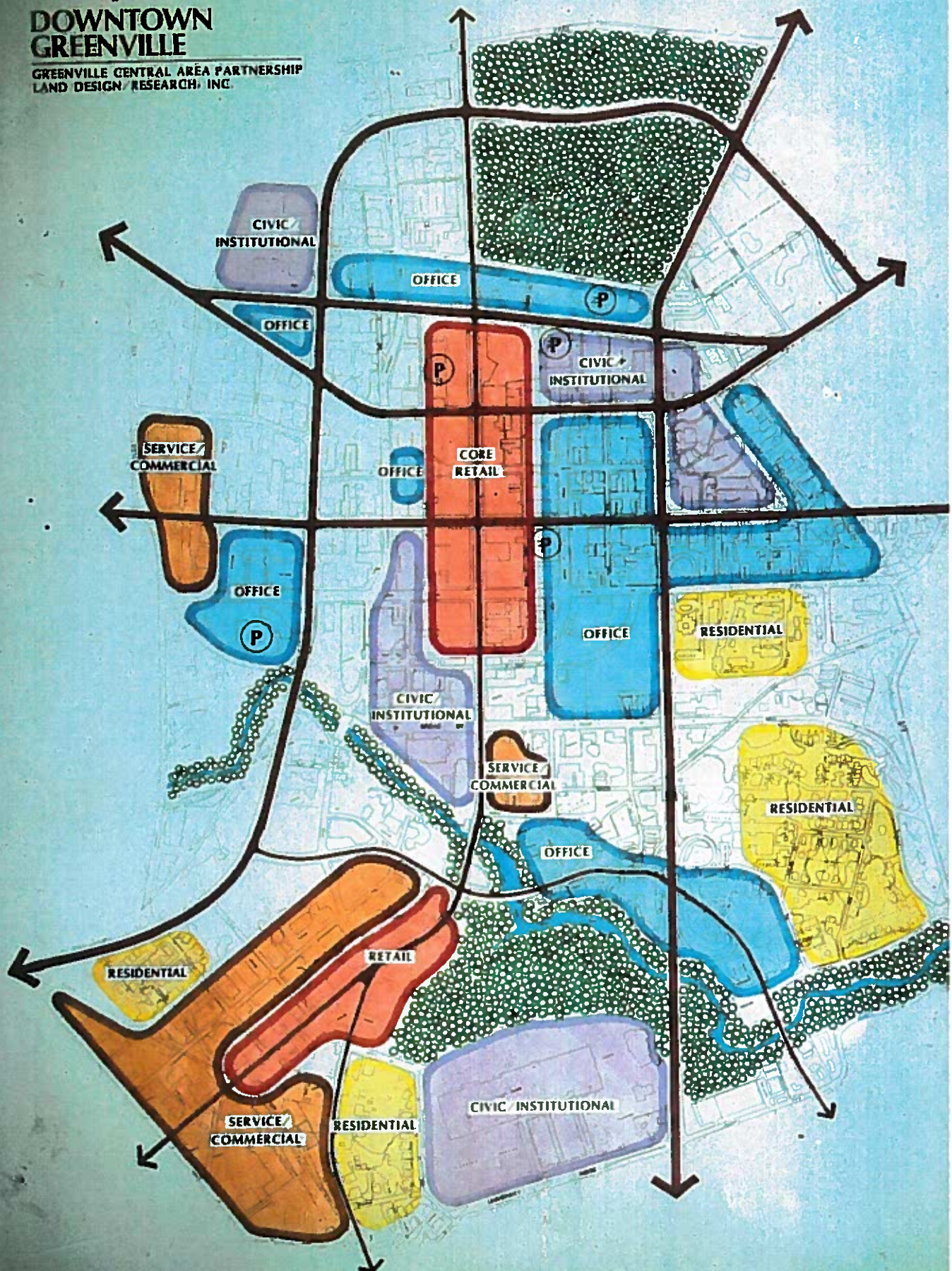
The consultants brought with them two drawings: one which defined areas of existing land use; and another which showed land use and opportunity sites. These drawings are presented in this report as Exhibit 1 and 2.

Cy Paumier and Don Hilderbrandt from LDR presented a slide show of other cities in this country which they felt had achieved a large measure of success in revitalizing their downtowns. Among the cities were: Portland, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; Alexandria, Virginia; and Baltimore, Maryland. Among the most important elements in the success of these cities is that they have each achieved a *distinctive sense of place*, a human scale, a lively mix of uses, and a twenty-four-hour environment. Each city is memorable for a special character all its own, and a series of public spaces and places which serve to express this character. The suggestion was made that Greenville is a healthy and growing city which has still to define for itself and others that which makes it distinctive and memorable.

Jim Cloar led a discussion in which the workshop participants were asked to define first the positive and then the negative aspects of the City. These are listed in Exhibit 3.

DOWNTOWN GREENVILLE

GREENVILLE CENTRAL AREA PARTNERSHIP
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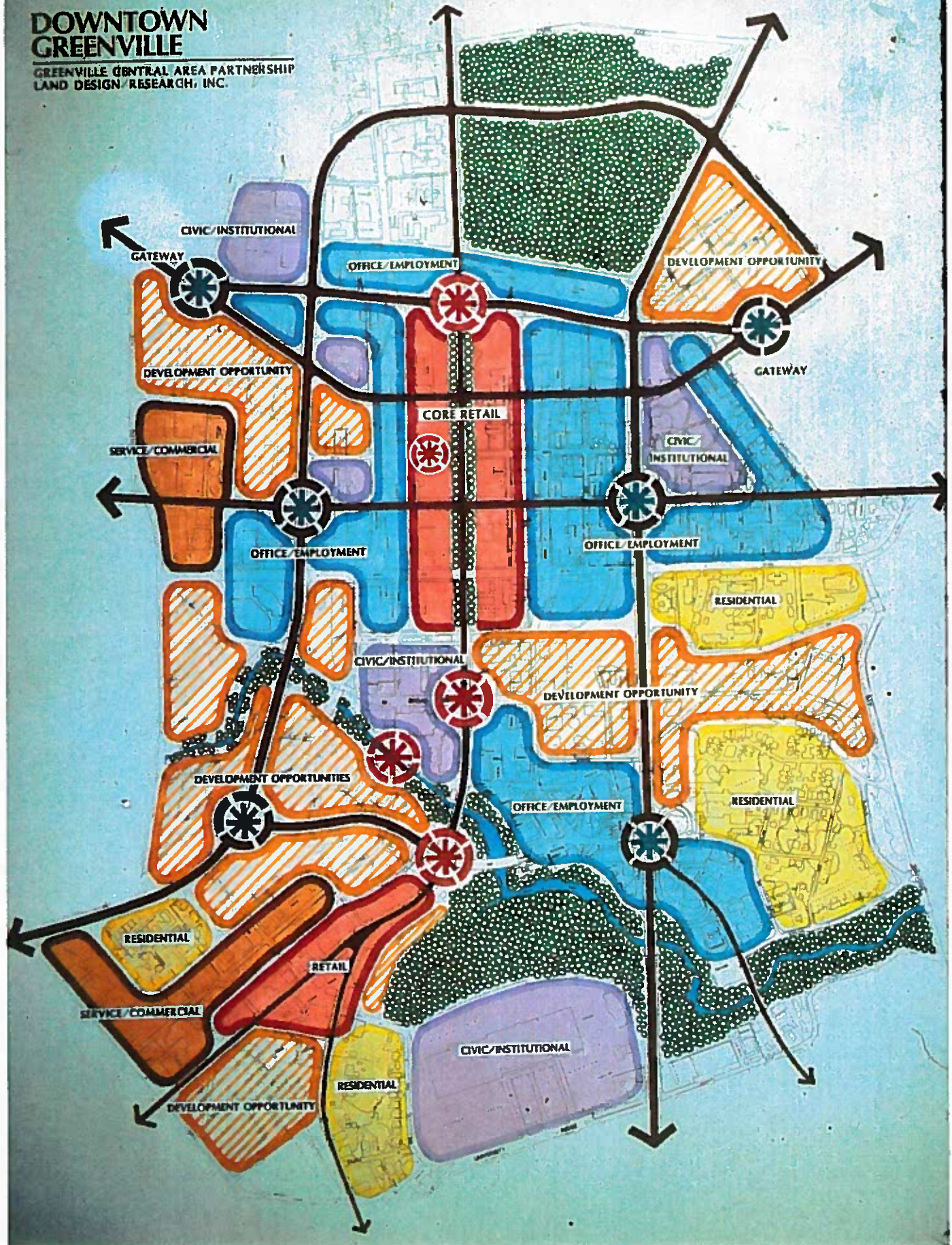


EXHIBIT 3: Positive and Negative Aspects of Greenville

Positive

Natural Features

Reedy River Falls
Water Features
Climate
Clean Air and Water
Trees, Hills, Vistas

City Center Features

Main Street Streetscape
Galleries, Antique Stores
Scale and Cohesion of Downtown
Piazza Bergamo/Coffee Street
Mall
Hyatt Complex
Shelter Center
Daniel Building
Specialty Shops
Performing Arts Center
Compactness of CBD
North-South Main Street Balance
of attractions
Downtown Grocery Store
Downtown Churches

City Resources

Easy Access
Renovations of Existing Buildings
Cultural Facilities
Employment Base
Public Transit
Downtown Housing
Buildings of Historic and
Architectural Value
Emerging Neighborhood Spirit
Festivals
County Square
Heritage Green
Availability of Parking
Variety of Restaurants
General Cleanliness

Negative

Natural Features

Lack of Access to Reedy River
Camperdown Bridge Over Falls

City Centre Physical Problems

Vacant Buildings
Poor Quality of Side- and
Cross-Streets
Poor Linkages from Side Streets
to Main Street
Blank Walls at Street Level
Traffic Congestion on Main St.
Inadequate Coliseum
Overhead Power Lines
Loss of Inner City Neighborhoods
Impending Relocation of Some
Major Office Tenants
Inadequate/Outdated Infrastructure
Sauer Building relationship to
PAC
Underutilized Land
No Central Public Space
Poor Entries to the Downtown
Poor Parking Management
Lack of Retail Coordination
Poor Pedestrian Linkages
Lack of Public Amenities
(drinking fountains, restrooms)
Lack of Public Art
Lack of State and Federal Gov't
Presence

Design/Development Constraints

No Downtown Design Controls
Difficult Ownership Patterns and
Property Configurations
Unrealistic Rents and Land
Values
Insufficient Private Investor and
Banking Interest in Downtown

Positive

City Resources (Cont'd)

West End
Real Estate Available for
Development
Attractive Nearby Neighborhoods
Financial Institutions
Utility Companies
Low Crime Rate
Cleveland Park and Zoo

Human Resources

Positive Attitudes Towards
Downtown
Assertive City Government
Enlightened Business Community
Personable Law Enforcement

Negative

Constraints (Cont'd)

No Definable Edges of Focus to
Downtown (No Sense of Place)
Competitive Disadvantage with
Suburban Office Market
Restrictive City Codes
No Overall Plan
Too Many Unimplemented Plans
Poor Access to Some Areas
Lack of County-wide Support
No Future Traffic Plan

Image Problems

No Night Life
No Balance of Night Life and
Downtown Residential
Vagrancy/Prostitution
Perceived Lack of Parking
Antagonism Toward Downtown by
Outlying Areas
Lack of Downtown Marketing
Program
Lack of Interest in Downtown
Lack of Downtown Image

Implementation Recommendations

The workshop divided into small groups twice: once to formulate vision statements from each group, and once near the end of the day to discuss implementation strategies for the ideas and concepts which emerged during the day. Because the vision statements tended to be expressed as a series of goals, only the implementation are presented below, followed by the general vision statement agreed upon by the entire group at the end of the day.

There were three categories of recommended implementation timetables: those tasks to be started or implemented within 90 days, those to be implemented within one-two years, and those to be implemented within five years. These are listed below, along with the group or groups which could be responsible for these tasks.

Ninety Days

Contract for traffic and bridge study. *City and GCAP.*

Task Force to meet regarding design review. *City.*

Begin study regarding downtown housing. *GCAP.*

Consolidate existing plans. *GCAP.*

Form coliseum support group. *GCAP.*

Contract for Reedy River Park construction. *City.*

Review plans for Piazza Bergamo and SCN Plaza. *City.*

Establish entity with authority to implement plans and programs. *City and GCAP.*

Start Marketing Plan. *GCAP.*

Obtain decision on removal of railroad near Reedy River. *City.*

Identify site for major public space. *City and GCAP.*

Start pedestrian and vehicular circulation study. *City.*

Make a decision regarding Sauer Building. *City.*

One-Two Years

Complete vehicular and traffic circulation plan. *City and GCAP.*

Complete traffic study to justify removing bridge. *City.*

Form downtown recruitment/package group for new businesses. *GCAP.*

Develop marketing strategy for downtown. *City and GCAP.*

Coordinate downtown events. *City and GCAP.*

Coordinate and market retail merchants. *GCAP.*

Develop downtown information materials/maps. *GCAP.*

Initiate Westend plan. *City and Westend Association.*

Complete financial plan for coliseum/convention center project site and obtain approval. *City, GCAP, Audit Board.*

Develop an Arts in Public Places master plan. *City and AIPP Committee.*

Complete master development strategy. *City and GCAP.*

Develop Botanical Gardens master plan. *City and committee.*

Develop a housing strategy. *GCAP.*

Develop Riverplace strategy. *GCAP.*

Complete 75 new units of downtown housing. *GCAP.*

Identify greenbelt land. *City and GCAP.*

Develop parking strategy to support mixed-use development. *City.*

Elevate participation in GCAP.

Move Municipal Court and Fire Department. *City.*

Five years

Complete bridge removal and rerouting of traffic. *City.*

Complete construction of coliseum. *City and GCAP.*

Implement Westend plan. *City and Westend Association.*

Conduct feasibility study for Reedy River uses, including damming. *City and GCAP.*

Complete Riverplace project. *GCAP.*

Complete Poinsett Hotel redevelopment. *GCAP.*

Complete Botanical Gardens. *GCAP and committee.*

Complete major pedestrian linkages. *City.*

Implement greenbelt. *City and GCAP.*

New downtown plan (5 years plus). *City and GCAP.*

Conclusion

The group concluded the day by formulating a statement defining a vision for Greenville for the year 2000:

"A thriving downtown which is recognized nationally as an example of a 'state-of-the-art' community in which to live, work, and play . . . which serves in itself as a national attraction."

III: LDR'S RESPONSE

The consultants were very enthusiastic about the day-long session in Greenville. In general, the issues, concerns, and strategies formulated by the group were similar to those the consultants' experience would suggest were important. The only differences tend to be in emphasis and details. Those elements the consultants felt were most important are presented below. Exhibit 4 illustrates the concepts discussed in this section.

The Definition of Development

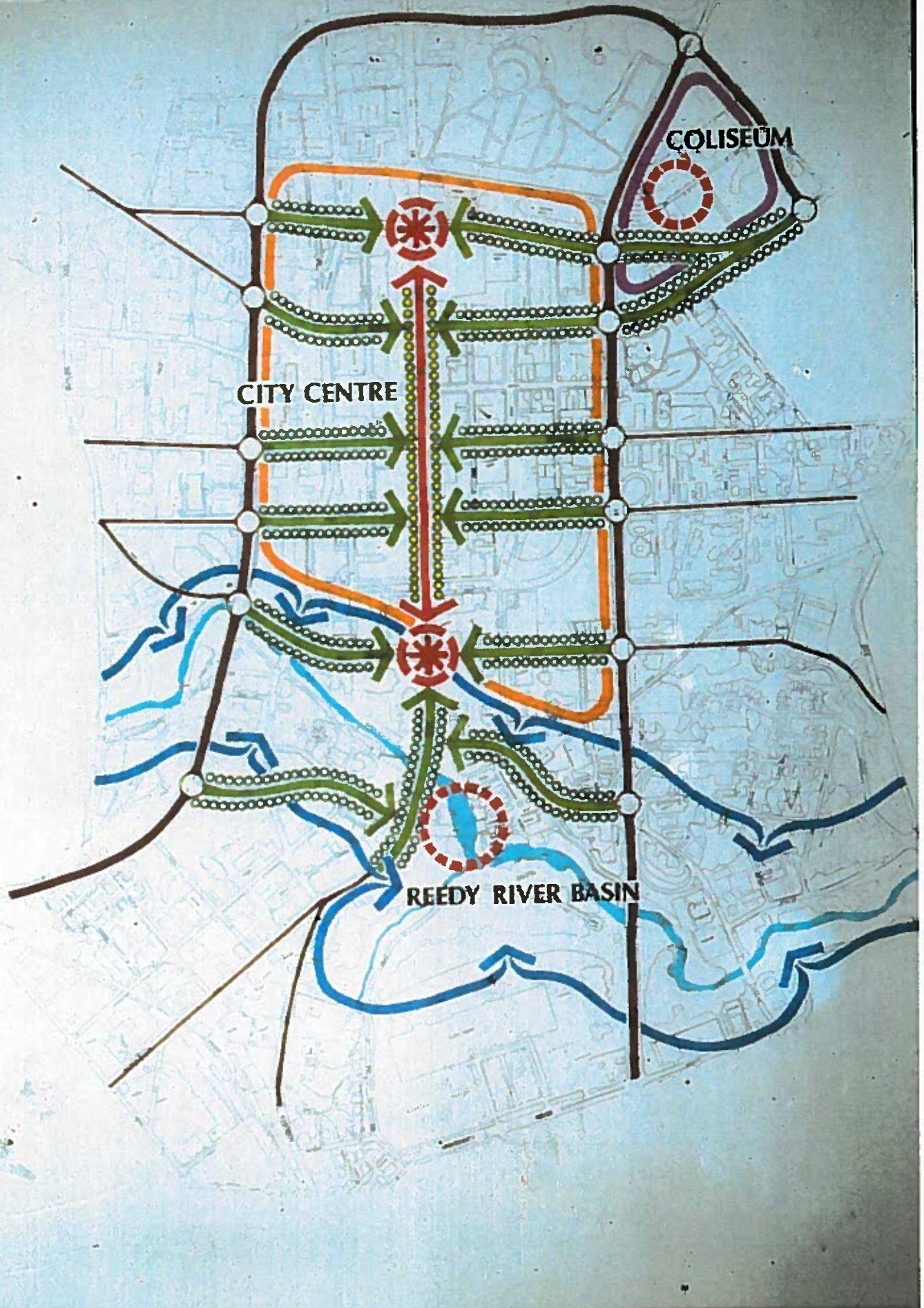
It is important to understand at the outset what exactly is meant by downtown development. In most people's minds, downtown development is synonymous with an improved tax base and an increase in jobs. This has most often been accomplished through office development in the past three decades. However, in many cities across the country, including Greenville, the current and projected demand for office space is growing at a very moderate rate. In addition, many community leaders, developers, and designers are beginning to realize that cities cannot be truly successful with a limited range of uses -- usually office, service, and retail.

Successful cities must attract people on weekends and in the evenings as well as during the business day. Residential development in cities, a full range of entertainment and cultural activities, and an exciting environment designed for people are elements which, when added to retail and office uses, create a synergy which benefits all activities and uses and give the city a distinctive and attractive character.

We assume that demand for office development will continue to grow at a moderate rate over the next five-ten years, but we do not believe it should be over-emphasized. Rather, we encourage the city and developers to strive for a lively mix of uses. Mixed-use development is likely to be as economically successful or more successful for the developer as single-use development, and will definitely be more successful for Greenville in helping to create a vital and exciting city.

DOWNTOWN GREENVILLE

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One other important consideration when discussing downtown development is the time needed to accomplish positive change. Although it is important to have short-term goals for the city, it is also important to remember that the life of a city spans centuries. It is not always wise to expect major changes to occur in five to ten years, because often rapid change brings with it the danger of making mistakes. It is important to have a vision and goals, and to begin with the projects which all concerned participants believe to be important. At the same time, periodic reevaluation and realignment of goals is healthy and should be encouraged.

City Centre

The consultants feel that a healthy and vital city centre is essential to a successful downtown. It must be a 24-hour activity center to which the people of the city gravitate. The city centre of Greenville is most logically defined as the area from the high-rise office buildings along Beattie Street on the north, to the Performing Arts Center in the south, and between Academy Street to the west and Church Street to the east. The identity, mix of uses, and linkages within this core area need to be strengthened. Main Street is the activity spine within the city centre, offering retail, service, and restaurants. Surrounding Main Street on both sides are strong office precincts. Office uses are an important part of the city centre, because they provide an essential economic base to the city, bring workers to the city during the day, and provide potential daytime and after-hours users for centre city activities. In order to encourage such use, attractive pedestrian linkages should be introduced running east-west across Main Street. These pedestrian streetscape treatments need not be as elaborate as the existing streetscape along Main Street, but should encourage foot traffic within the city centre.

Main Street is now a sort of urban village within the city, lower in height and density than the surrounding blocks, and offering a variety of activities. Because this human scale is important to the character of the street, safeguards should be put in place to ensure that the height and density are not increased. The existing mix of uses needs to be strengthened and augmented, and should include not only retail, restaurants, and an attractive streetscape, but also entertainment, public open spaces, and a mix of uses above the street level including office, service, and residential.

The Hyatt presently serves as the northern anchor to the city centre, but at the present time there is no anchor to the south. It is recommended, therefore, that one be created, probably at the intersection of Broad Street and South Main Street near the Performing Arts Center. The Performing Arts Center would be a major component of this southern anchor, complemented by attractive programmed open spaces at the intersection and new infill uses in the block to the northeast. Along Main Street between these two pedestrian magnets would be an enhanced mix of uses punctuated by a few smaller public spaces meant to provide variety and interest.

In light of this concept for the city centre, it is recommended that the Coffee Street Mall/Piazza Bergamo design be reexamined to ensure that this project is in context with the total development plan for the corridor. Specifically, pedestrian circulation patterns as they relate to parking, land uses, and activity areas need to be examined to ensure that pedestrian flows will activate these planned urban spaces.

At the present time there is a strong retail presence in the northern portion of the activity spine, and this should be retained and improved. The southern section, however, is more transitional, and in this zone it is recommended that a mix of uses including restaurant, specialty retail, entertainment, office, and residential uses be encouraged. Office and residential uses will provide a "resident base" for other activities and uses in this area. These types of uses could serve as a transition between the Performing Arts Center to the south and the retail and hotel uses to the north, and would encourage visitors to the PAC to take advantage of the surrounding uses before and after attending an event there.

Reedy River Falls Area

The Reedy River Basin and the Falls are a priceless asset for the city of Greenville, and potentially its single most important tourist attraction. This area can and should form the focal point for a resurgence of development. The Reedy River could become an attraction as significant as the canals in San Antonio or the parks in Savannah.

The Basin is defined in this context as the area within the downtown through which the Reedy River flows, and the land on each side of it which is primarily oriented, by topography or view, towards it. In the past, many buildings have turned their backs on the river, although this is already beginning to change with the construction of the Performing Arts Center, the proposals for Riverplace, and the planned renovation of Reedy River Park. Because this area has been neglected in the past, there is now a tremendous

number of opportunities for mixed-use development in this area.

The Reedy River Falls is the centerpiece of this attraction, at the center of the basin within the downtown and at an important man-made intersection between the developing Westend and the city centre. The Camperdown Bridge over the falls is a serious constraint to enhancement of the falls because it divides land bays, places the falls in shadow, and is a massive intrusion on the falls when viewed from the river or from the edges of the basin. The bridge is now also a *psychological barrier*, because in the past the bridge has provided cover for criminal activities. Removal of the bridge will allow the area around the falls to be developed in such a way that its natural beauty is more accessible, and thus more imagable and marketable as a unique feature of the City.

Removal of the bridge will also allow the area to become a distinctive mixed-use urban neighborhood. Likely uses for this area would be residential, professional offices, and arts-related uses which thrive in high-amenity, pedestrian-oriented enclaves near the center of the city. An added benefit of new development around this basin will be increased safety, because people living and working around this basin are the best insurance for a safe, vital environment in the Reedy River Fall area. If carefully developed and well-designed, the basin could be the key to a resurgence of interest in downtown living. Additionally, a distinctive district of this type would serve to enhance Greenville's image, as the Fourth Ward in Charlotte and Otterbein in Baltimore enhance those cities' images.

Renewed confidence in the safety, beauty, and pedestrian accessibility of the Reedy River Falls area will open up many exciting development opportunities for the presently underutilized land within the basin. Because of the lack of existing development in this area, renewal of the Reedy River Basin will take a number of years. To ensure the highest quality of development and protect this important resource, it will be important to develop a strong concept and guidelines for development of this district as soon as possible.

Coliseum/Convention Center

A coliseum for Greenville has been in the planning stages for some time. This planning process has involved the City, the County, the Auditorium Board, and GCAP. If this major project is to become a reality, continued cooperation in seeking the best outcome to this process is essential.

Several sites for the coliseum have been considered, both urban and suburban. The consultants feel strongly, however, that a project such as a coliseum is a natural choice for the city centre, where supporting facilities, activities, and entertainment are available, and where the people using such a complex would add to the life of the city, and where it would be much more likely to serve as a catalyst for development of facilities such as a convention center, and additional hotels and restaurants.

The urban site under consideration (between Beattie, Academy, and Church Streets) is appropriate and of adequate size. Care needs to be taken, however, to ensure that the site is developed to enhance the urban, pedestrian environment. The proposed coliseum as it faces North Beattie and Church Streets should as much as possible have a continuous built edge. The facade of the building also needs careful design, since convention centers in particular are notorious for creating massive, sterile blank walls -- inappropriate and to be avoided in an urban environment. In areas where parking or parking structures face onto the street, urban landscaping and/or architectural elements should be employed to reinforce the street edge and screen parking.

In addition, the buildings should be oriented toward the southwest corner of the site in order to relate to Main Street, and to help facilitate creation of a pedestrian linkage from Main Street along Beattie Street between the Hyatt and the convention center/coliseum. If designed properly, this site can also help form an attractive gateway into the downtown from the north and east.

An attractive people mover such as a tram or trolley bus should be considered in conjunction with this development, so that visitors are linked to Reedy River Park, the Westend, the Performing Arts Center, Main Street, and existing and proposed hotels. This could be very important because the distance from the proposed convention center and coliseum to the southern anchor area is considerable (convention facilities in Baltimore and San Antonio, for example, are very close to their attractions).

IV: ACTION PLAN AND PROGRAM

All of the goals mentioned in the work session are valid and could eventually be implemented. However, it is unlikely that all these goals can be implemented in the next five years. LDR has therefore chosen five main areas which we believe should receive initial attention in order to ensure the success of redevelopment efforts. Our experience tells us that it is these projects which will be most important in establishing a unique sense of place in Greenville, and that as these projects are implemented, other projects will become more economically viable. Recommendations are listed below, and include those groups which would be responsible for them and suggested timetables. A group would be responsible for a task by initiating it, paying for it, and/or implementing it. Exactly what role each group will take will require further negotiation and cooperation among the interested parties.

City Centre

- Continue the Streetscape from the intersection of Main and Court Streets south to the intersection of Camperdown and Main Streets, and eventually south to the planned Public Market in the Westend on Pendleton Street. *City: now in the planning stages.*
- Prepare a development plan and strategy for the city centre which identifies prime sites for infill development, recycling and renovation opportunities, open space, and special amenities, and suggests uses based on a concept plan for the area and market research. *City and GCAP: begin immediately; complete within four-six months.*
- Identify a cluster of activities, uses, and open space which will serve as a southern anchor for Main Street and begin concept development and design. *City and GCAP: begin within 90 days.*
- Identify existing and proposed secondary activity nodes along Main Street in the city centre and plan for improvements, design, and/or implementation. *City and GCAP: one-two years.*
- Improve the east-west linkages from the office areas and existing and proposed residential areas to Main Street. Design improved streetscapes and develop implementation plan. *City: one-two years.*

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- Develop a leasing strategy and marketing plan to attract infill uses along Main Street in the core. Strengthen the retail presence in the northern section; identify and market to new restaurant and entertainment uses in the southern section. *City and GCAP: begin immediately; complete within four-six months.*
 - Prepare a market and design analysis for potential residential development opportunities in the downtown area. *City and GCAP: six months-one year.*
 - Reexamine plans for Piazza Bergamo to ensure that the plans will fit into the overall strategy for the city centre Main Street activity spine. *City: begin immediately; complete within three months.*

Reedy River Falls Area

- Begin implementation of Reedy River Park renovations. Study the feasibility of designing and funding a Botanical Gardens in Reedy River Park or elsewhere in the City. *City and Garden Club: begin immediately; complete within two years.*
- Begin traffic and circulation studies exploring alternative traffic configurations which would allow removal of the Camperdown Bridge. *City: begin immediately; complete within six months-one year.*
- Remove Camperdown Bridge. *City and GCAP: within two years.*
- Develop a site-specific development plan and strategy for the entire basin, including development opportunities of all kinds. *City, GCAP, complete within one year.*
- Move forward with redevelopment plans for the Westend. *City and Westend Association: ongoing.*
- Prepare City Centre "image package" for use in selling Greenville as a desirable place to visit, work, live, and conduct business.

Coliseum/Convention Center

- Decide on a site for the coliseum (preferably between Beattie, Church, and Academy Streets) and more thoroughly define a program. *City, County, Auditorium Board, and GCAP.*
- Plan for a major architectural and urban design competition to develop plans for the coliseum. *City, County, Auditorium Board, and GCAP: begin within one year; plans within two years; complete within five years.*

Master Development Strategy

While it is important to move forward with the specific areas outlined above and in *Section III*, it is also important to look in some detail at the existing and proposed land uses and develop a strategy which coordinates development with the vision for Greenville in the year 2000.

Greenville has been fortunate in that the development which has taken place in the City in the past few decades has been of very high quality in spite of the fact that very few controls (other than enlightened City administrators and developers) have been in place. To ensure the continuation of this trend in the face of increasing density, however, it would be wise to develop an urban design plan that addresses such issues as pedestrian and vehicular circulation, building height and setback, and the interconnection of open spaces. Some elements of such a plan, which should be developed over the next year by the City and GCAP, would include:

- Confirmation, through further study, of overall land use recommendations.
- Pedestrian connections and linkages.
- Greenway and Parkway study for the City Centre.
- Density, setback and height guidelines and/or review.
- Overall parking strategy.
- Vehicular circulation.

Implementation and the Role of GCAP

A review of the workshop's implementation recommendations and of Action Program items (below) indicates a significant role for the Greenville Central Area Partnership (GCAP). This underscores the long-range benefit to be achieved through the cooperative efforts of the public and private sectors. At the present time, however, the capacity of GCAP is limited. With a budget of just over \$100,000 and a staff of two, the organization is severely constrained in its ability to be a true partner with the City.

An immediate and high priority should be placed on the re-organization of GCAP so that it attains enhanced staffing and financial resources, a broadened constituency, and an increased authority to implement plans and programs in cooperation with the City. One potential means to achieve this is through the establishment of a special assessment district in the downtown area. Similar districts in cities such as Oak Park, Illinois, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Burlington, Vermont generate revenues on the order of \$400,000-\$500,000 annually. Recent changes in state enabling legislation have made it easier to establish such districts in South Carolina cities.